

A REVIEW OF LAMAL'S CULTURAL CONTINGENCIES:
BEHAVIOR ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES ON
CULTURAL PRACTICES

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A behavior analysis of cultural practices has emerged from the behavior-analytic community within the context of a theoretical analysis of cultural phenomena (e.g., Biglan, 1995; Glenn, 1989; Harris, 1979). Broadening the scope of behavioral psychology, the analysis of cultural practices and their role in cultural survival has benefited from an interdisciplinary approach. Lamal's *Cultural Contingencies: Behavior Analytic Perspectives on Cultural Practices* contributes to an interdisciplinary treatment of cultural phenomena by presenting an eclectic series of chapters focusing on various cultural practices. Coherence among chapters is maintained by adherence to fundamental behavior-analytic concepts and principles.

Chapters 1 through 4 present analyses of health-related topics. The topic of managed care is analyzed by virtue of resultant metacontingencies that influence physicians' behavior. Chapter 2, which is about compliance to treatment regimens and appointment keeping in outpatient settings, discusses monitoring difficulties and how these difficulties affect the establishment of effective consequences. The relationship between laboratory-induced activity anorexia in rats and culturally induced anorexia in humans is discussed in chapter 3. Chapter 4 deals with the impact of community partnerships on public health. Chapters 5 and 6 introduce an international perspective. The utility of combining behavioral and demographic

analyses toward changing reproductive practices in Canada is the topic of chapter 5, followed by a discussion of problematic economic metacontingencies of Japanese society relating to women in chapter 6.

The second half of the book continues with an analysis of cultural practices beginning with welfare reform in chapter 7. This chapter offers valuable suggestions regarding what behavior analysis can provide toward establishing utilitarian outcomes. Chapter 8 provides an analysis and introduction to an experimental approach for improving contingencies associated with Aid to Families with Dependent Children. Following with a comprehensive discussion of family, school, and peer environments, chapter 9 emphasizes the importance of multicontextual intervention in changing the prevalence of successful children. The final chapters discuss experimental communities, media propaganda, and visual arts. Systematic and data-based comparisons between experimental communities, including a discussion of data significant to an analysis of cultural survival, are presented in chapter 10. Chapter 11 considers a behavior-analytic understanding of controlling functions of postmodern propaganda and suggests useful areas of research on changing destructive cultural practices. Chapter 12 finishes the book with an analysis of behaviors of individuals who are involved in visual arts, suggesting that an analysis of cultural practices must always include an analysis of contingencies that influence individual behavior.

All chapters provide reviews of relevant behavior-analytic research and conclude that behavioral scientists have much to contrib-

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ute. In general, this book might have been improved if some attention had been given to an analysis of metacontingencies that obstruct the involvement of behavioral scientists. Further, including discussions of future directions for behavior-analytic research in all chapters would have added to coherence.

An important issue regarding the role of behavior analysis with respect to cultural practices is the relationship of an analysis of individual behavior to an analysis of group behavior. The interrelation between group practice and individual behavior has been a subject of debate, given that individual behavior is our discipline's unit of analysis. With the exception of a few chapters, this book clarifies the connection between different levels of analyses, including the impact of group designs and integration of group interventions and single-subject strategies. Lamal's chapter on the visual arts is particularly useful in articulating how fundamental behavior-analytic theory is applied to an analysis of group behavior.

In summary, this book presents an interesting assortment of topics. Various cultural

practices, important to the survival of a culture as a whole, are described and interpreted, and the chapters adhere consistently to behavior-analytic theory. The editor assumes prior knowledge of behavior-analytic concepts and principles; thus, this book is designed for an audience of advanced students, academics, and researchers. Readers should find *Cultural Contingencies: Behavior Analytic Perspectives on Cultural Practices* an interesting source of the many diverse areas of study for behavior analysts interested in cultural phenomena.

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